

The Back Up System

By Peter David Smith

Five years after the hippies' "Flower Power Summer of Love" and five years before the punks' massive assault on Rock and Roll was the phenomenon known as "The Freak Scene" or "The Alternative Society".

The convergence of Freak and Alternative produced a world of things changing into other things in an ongoing chaos process in which Sweet Fanny Addams was king.

The philosophy of the Alternative Society was peaceful revolution. We would subvert the system by building our own systems which would slowly and haphazardly take over from the government's way of doing things. Eventually people would not need the government.

We would have our own transportation in the form of hitch-hiking, car sharing and peace convoys. We would have our own housing system by way of squatting, tents, benders, geodesic domes and mobile homes. We would grow our own vegetarian food. The government would simply fade into obsolescence.

Schools would be replaced by Information Centres.

The difference between a school and an Information Centre is that the school wants to control your behaviour and demands regular attendance. Through regular attendance and behavioural conditioning a school arranges people into classes and into ranks and levels with social superiority and inferiority. The Information Centre, on the other hand, is simply available.

People would go to an Information Centre when they actually wanted to know something. The Information Centre would do the important part of what schools do, providing knowledge, but The Information Centre would not impose rules of behaviour and would not create a stratification of people's relative skills and awareness. Everyone would be on one level. It was the new "Levellers" philosophy re-emerging.

The Information Centre would be there when you needed to know how to mend a tractor or mix a martini. The Information Centre would not demand your regular attendance.

These were the various philosophies of the Alternative Society circa 1972.

Meanwhile, The Freak Scene was essentially the free thinking, *make up your own philosophy*, component of the New Age. The Alternative Society was coming from serious Anarcho-Pacifist planning while the Freak Scene was coming from crazy Rock and Roll hedonism and the ongoing fight between Art and Dada.

Alternative media consisted of underground newspapers, underground movies and word of mouth. You could find it at an Information Centre.

Freaks were sometimes fond of replacing the statement "We're not hippies, man. We're *people!*" with the satirical "We're not people, man. We're *freaks!*"

After five more years of this punk happened.

It was inevitable.

Something else was developing under the

under the

underground. It was the Internet.

The internet in its original form was useful but not very flashy or inspiring to non-geeks. (Freaks - geeks - inevitable).

It was at the end of the 1980s that William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's vision of cyberspace coincided with Tim Berners-Lee's stroke of genius, The World Wide Web.

The W.W.W. would enable the Information Centre idea to mutate and become universally available. The underground continues conceptually, but what about the physical world?

No matter how much information is freely available on the W.W.W. we needed to turn that information into physical real life. That's where mobile devices come into their own. Mobile devices give us the necessary link between all the massive amounts of information and the physical world of transport, housing, food, health and locality.

Initially I hated mobile phones because they were a thinly disguised method of tracking everybody through satellite communications and compiling the intel in the data banks of the security services. However, it is necessary to keep an open mind and the government's tools of surveillance can be turned to the advantage of the common people.

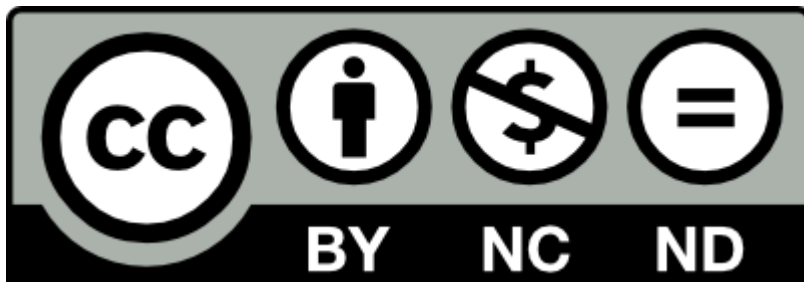
So, why am I attempting to preserve the knowledge of the Information Centre concept?

Simply, it's a back-up system.

When we venture into areas not served by satellite communication links, when we enter an area under localised shut down, or when E.M.P. weapons knock out the internet servers, we are going to need a back up system. We are going to need the Alternative Society.

All of my writing, sound art, visual art etc. is under a Creative Commons copyright.

[CC BY-NC-ND](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)



This license enables re-users to copy and distribute the material in any medium or format in unadapted form only, for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator.

CC BY-NC-ND includes the following elements:

BY: credit must be given to the creator.

NC: Only noncommercial uses of the work are permitted.

ND: No derivatives or adaptations of the work are permitted.